1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4

of Spaniards he had slain. Here it may be observed that the Americans, who have had the genuine small-pox, do not fear the return of it. At five years of age I had the small-pox so slightly, that I was marked in ten places only, and was ill but two days. Yet that this short sickness is, by the law of nature, sufficient, I was fully persuaded, after living many months, day and night, with Indians who had the disorder, without taking the infection.

Almost the same observations may be made on measles as on small-pox. It rages at intervals, spreads, and cuts off vast numbers in America. Whilst I resided in the town of St. Joachim, out of two thousand Indians so many were laid up with this disorder, that often none were left to supply the sick with food, water, wood and medicines. The offices due to the minds and bodies of the sick kept Father Joseph Fleischauer and myself occupied day and night for some months. That pestilence carried off two hundred persons, out of which number there were very few infants, and no old men, most of them being persons in the flower of their age. The tertian ague sometimes spreads like a contagion amongst the Indians, but is more troublesome than dangerous, and prevails only in those places where stinking ditch water is in constant use. For the same reason ter-

Brishoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
814 Abipon 814

shaken by one of my companions, who found a snake in the garden close to a plant of it. But the leaves of a plant are endued with different properties from its roots and fruit. May not the garlick alone, and not the leaves, be the object of the serpent's abhorrence? The Abipones and Mocobios suspend a crocodile's tooth from their neck or arm, thinking it a powerful amulet against snakes of every kind. In this they are imitated by many Missionaries and Spaniards, who often purchase the teeth of these animals at a high price. I have known Spaniards who thought themselves secure from the bites of serpents when they had a bit of deer's skin about their body. There are persons who rub their feet and hands with the juice of a radish, and believe themselves fortified against poisons. I should not take upon me to despise these safeguards, because they are approved by the experience of the Americans; but it is the part of a prudent person never to place such entire confidence in them as to lay aside caution, and lose sight of danger, which, in regard to serpents, lurks where none appears.

For this reason I constantly exhorted the Americans to circumspection; when they had to rest in the plain at night or mid-day, to choose a situation free from bushes, reeds, and caverns, and at a distance from the banks of

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
S14 Abipon S14

pools and rivers; to take a survey of the spot; to examine the tall grass, decayed trunks, and recesses of shrubs and rocks, before they sat or lay down. The Indians, who neglect these precautions, are constantly liable to the bites of serpents. Throwing themselves carelessly on the ground, they sleep soundly without a fear or a thought about serpents, and are often awakened with a scream by the bite of one. When travelling bare-footed they employ their eyes in watching birds in the air and monkeys in the trees, when they ought, at every step, to examine the dangerous ground they are treading. The Abipones, from being an equestrian people, and more circumspect, seldomer suffer from serpents than the Guaranies, who always walk on foot, and use less caution. In the town of St. Joachim, where the climate is very hot, and the land is surrounded with marshes, rivers, and woods, venomous animals are unusually numerous. Scarce a week passes that some Indians are not bitten by serpents. During the eight years that I spent in this town a vast number of persons were bitten by various serpents, but, with the exception of two youths who were killed by a rattle-snake, not a single individual died: all were healed by the use of one and the same remedy. Now listen attentively whilst I make you acquainted with that